

What is claimed is:

1. A method for providing customized information to an aggregation of users having a common affiliation, comprising the steps of:

obtaining survey data indicative of whether a category is a topic of interest to said aggregation of users; and

based on said survey data, designing a customized report for providing information to said aggregation of users.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein said category is predefined.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein said information is time-sensitive.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the customized report is an information portal accessible to a user on a computer network.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the users are employees of the same business.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein said report-designing step comprises selecting, for an aggregation of users, the categories of information that said users will be presented with in a report.

7. The method of claim 6, where the report is an information portal accessible to a user on a computer network.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the category selection step is performed by an analyst.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein said analyst is an employee of a provider of said information portal.

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said analyst has access to an expert in the subject matter of at least one category.

11. The method of claim 9, further comprising the step of providing said user the ability to send an email directly to one of said expert and said analyst.
12. The method of claim 11, wherein an item on said information portal contains means for directly emailing the author of said item.
13. The method of claim 1, wherein said survey comprises an interview.
14. The method of claim 1, wherein said survey comprises a written document filled out by a user.
15. An information portal for providing customized information to an aggregation of users over a network, comprising:
  - means for displaying a plurality of news summaries for a plurality of regions; and
  - means for displaying stock market information.
16. The information portal of claim 15, wherein said news summaries comprise approximately 30-70% factual material and approximately 30-70% analysis.
17. The information portal of claim 16, wherein said analysis is customized for said aggregation of users.
18. A graphical user interface for providing customized information comprising:
  - a plurality of areas on a computer screen, said plurality of areas comprising an area displaying a first plurality of headlines, each of said first plurality of headlines corresponding to a regional news summary item, and a second plurality of headlines, each of said second plurality of headlines corresponding to an in-depth analysis item,
  - wherein by selecting a headline, a user can view the item corresponding to said headline.

19. A server system for providing an information portal comprising: an information portal component, said information portal component comprising means for displaying, on a user's computer screen, a graphical user interface for providing access to content selected based on a survey conducted on an aggregation of users; and

an information retrieval component comprising:

a data storage medium for storing information for display on said graphical user interface,

a receiving component for receiving requests for information stored on said data storage medium, and

a retrieving component, responsive to said receiving component, for retrieving information stored on said data storage medium, and

a transmitting component, for transmitting data retrieved from said data storage medium to said information portal component.

20. A method for providing timely access to expertise using a client system, the method comprising:

displaying an information portal, said information portal providing access to a screen displaying an item selected based on a survey of an aggregation of users, wherein said item was item written by an individual having an email address; and

in response to a selection by a user on said item-displaying screen, displaying a screen adapted for writing an email to said individual.

21. The method of claim 20, wherein said information portal contains information related to news from a plurality of regions.

22. A method of providing customized information through an information portal, comprising:

conducting a survey of an aggregation of users;

receiving results of said survey;

selecting, responsive to said results receiving step, a plurality of categories of information; and

providing access to information falling in said plurality of categories to said aggregation of users.

23. An article of manufacture comprising an information storage medium encoded with a computer-readable data structure for use in connection with serving an information portal, comprising:

means for displaying, on a user's computer screen, a graphical user interface for providing access to content selected based on a survey conducted on an aggregation of users;

means for receiving a request for specific information from said user;

means, responsive to said receiving means, for retrieving specific information responsive to said user request; and

means for displaying said specific information to said user.

24. An article of manufacture comprising a propagated signal, said signal having encoded therein machine-readable information comprising information related to an information portal for providing customized information, said customized information being selected in response to a survey of an aggregation of users, and said customized information comprising regional news information being displayed under headings that identify a plurality of regions.

25. A method for generating customized information, comprising the steps of:

receiving attribute data for a record residing on a data communications network;

storing said attribute data in a first data bank;

generating a reference in a second data bank based on said attribute data, said reference being indicative of a category to which said record relates;

obtaining survey data indicative of whether said category is a topic of interest to a user;

providing an analyst to analyze said survey data, said analyst retrieving said attribute data from said first data bank based on said category and said reference; and

generating a report based on said survey data and said attribute data.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein said category is predefined.

27. The method of claim 25, wherein said attribute data includes data representative of one or more of the following properties:

the contents of said record,

a network addressable location for said record,

an age of said record,

an author of said record,

a publisher of said record, and

a link to another record.

28. The method of claim 25, wherein said step of generating a reference includes the step of training a neural network processor to recognize whether said record relates to said category.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein said training step includes:

defining a set of categories;

identifying a set of training records;

presenting said neural network processor with said training records;

identifying a set of sample testing records; and

presenting said neural network processor with said sample testing records.

30. The method of claim 25, wherein said reference is one of a plurality of references generated by said step of generating a reference, said plurality of references being indicative of a plurality of categories to which said record relates.

31. The method of claim 25, wherein said step of generating a report includes producing a summary of the contents of said record.

32. The method of claim 25, wherein said step of generating a report includes producing an analysis of the contents of said record.

33. The method of claim 25, wherein said step of generating a report includes providing access to the contents of said record.

34. The method of claim 25, wherein said step of generating a report includes providing access to a different record from said data communications network, said different record containing data related to said category.

35. The method of claim 25, wherein said step of generating a report includes providing means for sending said report to a different user.

36. The method of claim 25, wherein said step of generating a report includes providing means for communicating with an author of said report.

37. The method of claim 25, further comprising the steps of:

generating index data for said first data bank; and

retrieving said attribute data from said first data bank based on said index data.

38. The method of claim 25, further comprising the steps of:
- storing said report; and
- retrieving said report bank based on a condition.
39. The method of claim 38, further comprising the steps of:
- receiving a request from said user for a different report; and
- retrieving said different report from said third data bank.
40. The method of claim 25, further comprising the steps of:
- storing said record; and
- retrieving said record based on said category.
41. The method of claim 25, wherein said record comprises a prior report wherein said prior report was generated by said method of claim 25.
42. The method of claim 25, further comprising a step of producing a user profile configured to store preference information entered by said user.
43. The method of claim 25, further comprising a step of prohibiting unauthorized access to said report.
44. The method of claim 25, wherein said first data bank and said second data bank are the same.
45. The method of claim 25, wherein said data communications network is the Internet.
46. The method of claim 25, wherein said data communications network is a local area network.

47. The method of claim 25, further comprising the step of sending said report to said user.
48. The method of claim 47, wherein said sending step includes determining how said report is displayed to said user.
49. The method of claim 47, wherein said sending step includes publishing said report on the Internet.
50. The method of claim 47, wherein said sending step includes publishing said report on a local area network.
51. The method of claim 47, wherein said sending step includes publishing a link to said report on a home page for said user.
52. The method of claim 47, wherein said sending step includes publishing said report in an electronic mail message.
53. The method of claim 47, wherein said sending step includes publishing said report in a facsimile transmission.
54. The method of claim 25, further comprising a step of notifying said user that said report is available.
55. The method of claim 25, further comprising the step of transmitting a multimedia signal to said user.
56. The method of claim 55, wherein said step of transmitting a multimedia signal includes transmitting said multimedia signal from a multimedia server to a remote terminal under control of a multimedia user interface.
57. The method of claim 56, wherein said step of transmitting a multimedia signal comprises transmitting audio data.



58. The method of claim 56, wherein said step of transmitting a multimedia signal comprises transmitting a visual image.

59. The method of claim 56, wherein said step of transmitting a multimedia signal comprises:

transmitting audio data; and

transmitting visual images.

60. A computer-implemented method for generating customized information, comprising the steps of:

receiving, via a data communications network, attribute data for a record residing on said data communications network;

storing said attribute data in a first memory storage area;

generating a reference in a second memory storage area based on said attribute data, said reference being indicative of a category to which said record relates;

receiving survey data indicative of whether said category is a topic of interest to a user;

responsive to said survey data, retrieving said attribute data from said first memory storage area based on said category and said reference;

generating said customized report based on said survey data and said attribute data; and

transmitting said customized report to a remote terminal.

61. The method of claim 60, wherein said category is predefined.

62. The method of claim 60, wherein said attribute data includes data representative of one or more of the following properties:

the contents of said record,  
a network addressable location for said record,  
an age of said record,  
an author of said record,  
a publisher of said record, and  
a link to another record.

63. The method of claim 60, wherein said step of generating a reference includes the step of training a neural network processor to recognize whether said record relates to said category.

64. The method of claim 63, wherein said training step includes:

defining a set of categories;  
identifying a set of training records;  
presenting said neural network processor with said training records;  
identifying a set of sample testing records; and  
presenting said neural network processor with said sample testing records.

65. The method of claim 60, wherein said reference is one of a plurality of references generated by said step of generating a reference, said plurality of references being indicative of a plurality of categories to which said record relates.

66. The method of claim 60, wherein said step of generating said customized report includes producing a summary of the contents of said record.

67. The method of claim 60, wherein said step of generating said customized report includes producing an analysis of the contents of said record.

68. The method of claim 60, wherein said step of generating said customized report includes providing a button configured to facilitate viewing the contents of said record.

69. The method of claim 60, wherein said step of generating said customized report includes providing a button configured to facilitate retrieving a different record from said data communications network, said different record containing data related to said category.

70. The method of claim 60, wherein said step of generating said customized report includes providing a button configured to facilitate transmitting said customized report to a different user.

71. The method of claim 60, wherein said step of generating said customized report includes providing a button configured to facilitate electronic communication with an author of said customized report.

72. The method of claim 60, further comprising the steps of:  
generating index data for said first memory storage area; and  
retrieving said attribute data from said first memory storage area based on said index data.

73. The method of claim 60, further comprising the steps of:  
storing said customized report; and  
retrieving said customized report based on a condition.

74. The method of claim 73, further comprising the steps of:  
receiving a request from said user for a different customized report; and  
retrieving said different customized report from said third memory storage area.

75. The method of claim 60, further comprising the steps of:
- storing said record; and
- retrieving said record based on said category.
76. The method of claim 60, wherein said record comprises a report previously generated by said method of claim 60.
77. The method of claim 60, wherein said step of transmitting said customized report further includes a step of determining how said report is displayed to said user.
78. The method of claim 60, further comprising a step of producing a user profile, configured to store preference information entered by said user.
79. The method of claim 60, further comprising a step of prohibiting unauthorized access to said customized report.
80. The method of claim 60, wherein said first memory storage area and said second memory storage area are the same.
81. The method of claim 60, wherein said data communications network is the Internet.
82. The method of claim 60, wherein said data communications network is a local area network.
83. The method of claim 60, wherein said transmitting step includes publishing said customized report on the Internet.
84. The method of claim 60, wherein said transmitting step includes publishing said customized report on a local area network.
85. The method of claim 60, wherein said transmitting step includes publishing a link to said customized report on a home page for said user.

86. The method of claim 60, wherein said transmitting step includes publishing said customized report in an electronic mail message.

87. The method of claim 60, wherein said transmitting step includes publishing said customized report in a facsimile transmission.

88. The method of claim 60, further comprising a step of notifying said user that said customized report is available.

89. The method of claim 60, further comprising the step of transmitting a multimedia signal to said user.

90. The method of claim 89, wherein said step of transmitting a multimedia signal includes transmitting, under control of a multimedia user interface, said multimedia signal from a multimedia server to a remote terminal.

91. The method of claim 90, wherein said step of transmitting a multimedia signal comprises transmitting audio data.

92. The method of claim 90, wherein said step of transmitting a multimedia signal comprises transmitting a visual image.

93. The method of claim 90, wherein said step of transmitting a multimedia signal comprises:

transmitting audio data; and

transmitting visual images.

94. An apparatus for generating customized information, comprising:

means for receiving attribute data for a record residing on a data communications network from said data communications network, and for storing said attribute data in a first data bank;

means for generating, based on said attribute data, a reference in a second data bank, said reference being indicative of a category to which said record relates;

means for obtaining survey data indicative of whether said category is a topic of interest to said user;

means, for retrieving said attribute data from said first data bank based on said category and said reference; and

means for generating a report based on said survey data and said attribute data.

95. The method of claim 94, wherein said category is predefined.

96. The apparatus of claim 94, wherein said attribute data includes data representative of one or more of the following properties:

the contents of said record,

a network addressable location for said record,

an age of said record,

an author of said record,

a publisher of said record, and

a link to another record.

97. The apparatus of claim 94, wherein said means for generating a reference comprises a neural network processor that is trained to recognize whether said record relates to said category.

98. The apparatus of claim 94, wherein said reference is one of a plurality of references generated by said means for generating a reference, said plurality of references being indicative of a plurality of categories to which said record relates.

99. The apparatus of claim 94, wherein said report comprises a summary of the contents of said record.

100. The apparatus of claim 94, wherein said report comprises an analysis of the contents of said record.

101. The apparatus of claim 94, wherein said report includes means for viewing the contents of said record.

102. The apparatus of claim 94, wherein said report includes means for retrieving a different record from said data communications network, said different record containing data related to said category.

103. The apparatus of claim 94, wherein said report includes means for transmitting said report to a different user.

104. The apparatus of claim 94, wherein said report includes means for communicating with an author of said report.

105. The apparatus of claim 94, further comprising means for indexing said first data bank; and means for retrieving said attribute data from said first data bank based on said means for indexing.

106. The apparatus of claim 94, further comprising:

means for storing said report; and

means for retrieving said report based on a condition.

107. The apparatus of claim 106, further comprising:

means for receiving a request from said user for a different report; and

means for retrieving said different report from said third data bank.

108. The apparatus of claim 94, further comprising:

means for storing said record in a fourth data bank;

and means for retrieving said record from said fourth data bank based on said category.

109. The apparatus of claim 94, wherein said record comprises a report previously generated by said apparatus of claim 94.

110. The apparatus of claim 94, further comprising means for storing preference information entered by said user.

111. The apparatus of claim 94, further comprising security means for prohibiting unauthorized access to said report.

112. The apparatus of claim 94, further comprising means, under control of said security means, for generating a profile for said user.

113. The apparatus of claim 112, wherein said profile comprises one or more preferences for transmitting said report to said user.

114. The apparatus of claim 113, wherein said profile comprises one or more preferences for displaying said report to said user.

115. The apparatus of claim 94, wherein said first data bank and said second data bank are the same.

116. The apparatus of claim 94, wherein said data communications network is the Internet.

117. The apparatus of claim 94, wherein said data communications network is a local area network.

118. The apparatus of claim 94, further comprising means for sending said report to said user.



119. The apparatus of claim 118, wherein said means for sending comprises means, coupled to said means for retrieving said attribute data from said first data bank, for determining how said report is displayed to said user.

120. The apparatus of claim 118, wherein said means for sending includes means for publishing said report on the Internet.

121. The apparatus of claim 118, wherein said means for sending includes means for publishing said report on a local area network.

122. The apparatus of claim 118, wherein said means for sending includes means for publishing a link to said report on a home page for said user.

123. The apparatus of claim 118, wherein said means for sending includes means for publishing said report in an electronic mail message.

124. The apparatus of claim 118, wherein said means for sending includes means for publishing said report in a facsimile transmission.

125. The apparatus of claim 94, further comprising means for notifying said user that said report is available.

126. The apparatus of claim 94, further comprising means for transmitting a multimedia signal to said user.

127. The apparatus of claim 126, wherein said means for transmitting a multimedia signal includes:

a multimedia user interface; and

means for transmitting, under control of said multimedia user interface, said multimedia signal from a multimedia server to a remote terminal.

128. The apparatus of claim 127, wherein said multimedia signal includes means for transmitting audio data.

129. The apparatus of claim 127, wherein said means for transmitting a multimedia signal includes means for transmitting a visual image.

130. The apparatus of claim 127, wherein said means for transmitting a multimedia signal includes:

means for transmitting audio data; and

means for transmitting a visual image.

131. An apparatus for generating customized information, comprising:

a content aggregator connection configured to receive attribute data for a record residing on a data communications network from said data communications network, and to store said attribute data in a first data bank;

a categorizer/indexer configured to generate a reference in a second data bank based on said attribute data, said reference being indicative of a category to which said record relates;

a search engine that retrieves said attribute data from said first data bank based on said category and said reference; and

a data analyst, operating in response to a determination that said category is a topic of interest to a user, that produces a report based on said attribute data.

132. The method of claim 131, wherein said category is predefined.

133. The apparatus of claim 131 wherein said determination is made based on a survey administered to said user.

134. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said attribute data includes data representative of one or more of the following properties:

the contents of said record,

a network addressable location for said record,

an age of said record,

an author of said record,

a publisher of said record, and

a link to another record.

135. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said categorizer/indexer includes a neural network processor that is trained to recognize whether said record relates to said category.

136. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said reference is one of a plurality of references generated by said categorizer/indexer, said plurality of references being indicative of a plurality of categories to which said record relates.

137. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said report comprises a summary of the contents of said record.

138. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said report comprises an analysis of the contents of said record.

139. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said report includes a button configured to facilitate viewing the contents of said record.

140. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said report includes a button configured to facilitate retrieving a different record from said data communications network, said different record containing data related to said category.

141. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said report includes a button configured to facilitate transmitting said report to a different user.

142. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said report includes a button configured to facilitate electronic communication with an author of said report.

143. The apparatus of claim 131, further comprising:

an index for said first data bank; and

a search engine that retrieves said attribute data from said first data bank based on said index.

144. The apparatus of claim 131, further comprising:

a third data bank for storing said report; and

a report search engine configured to retrieve said report from said third data bank based on said category.

145. The apparatus of claim 144, wherein said first data bank, said second data bank and said third data bank are the same.

146. The apparatus of claim 131, further comprising:

a fourth data bank for storing said record; and

a record search engine configured to retrieve said record from said fourth data bank based on said category.

147. The apparatus of claim 146, wherein said first data bank, said second data bank and said fourth data bank are the same.

148. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said record comprises a prior report, wherein said prior report was generated by said apparatus 131.

149. The apparatus of claim 131, further comprising a user profile module, configured to store preference information entered by said user.

150. The apparatus of claim 131, further comprising a security module that prohibits unauthorized access to said report.

151. The apparatus of claim 131, further comprising a profile generator, under control of said security module, that generates a profile for said user.
152. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said profile includes one or more preferences for transmitting said report to said user.
153. The apparatus of claim 152, wherein said profile includes comprises one or more preferences for displaying said report to said user.
154. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said first data bank and said second data bank are the same.
155. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said data communications network is the Internet.
156. The apparatus of claim 131, wherein said data communications network is a local area network.
157. The apparatus of claim 131, further comprising a report transmitter that transmits said report to said user.
158. The apparatus of claim 157, wherein said report transmitter includes a user interface engine, coupled to said search engine, that determines how said report is displayed to said user.
159. The apparatus of claim 157, wherein said report transmitter publishes said report on the Internet.
160. The apparatus of claim 157, wherein said report transmitter publishes said report on a local area network.
161. The apparatus of claim 157, wherein said report transmitter publishes a link to said report on a home page for said user.

162. The apparatus of claim 157, wherein said report transmitter publishes said report in an electronic mail message.

163. The apparatus of claim 157, wherein said report transmitter publishes said report in a facsimile transmission.

164. The apparatus of claim 131, further comprising a messaging system that notifies said user that said report is available.

165. The apparatus of claim 131, further comprising a multimedia subsystem.

166. The apparatus of claim 165, wherein said multimedia subsystem includes:

a multimedia user interface; and

a multimedia server, operating under control of said multimedia user interface, configured to transmit said multimedia signal to a remote terminal.

167. The apparatus of claim 166, wherein said multimedia signal includes audio data.

168. The apparatus of claim 166, wherein said multimedia signal includes a visual image.

169. The apparatus of claim 168, wherein said multimedia signal includes:

audio data; and

a visual image.